

Data Sources

Census of Agriculture is an enumeration of all U.S. farms conducted every 5 years. A farm is currently defined as any place that sells, or normally would sell, at least \$1,000 of agricultural products annually. USDA conducted the most recent Census of Agriculture in 1997. For publications and more information, see <<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/>>. The U.S. Bureau of the Census conducted agricultural censuses for 1992 and earlier years.

County Business Patterns. The U.S. Bureau of the Census publishes an annual series, the County Business Patterns, that provides estimates of employment, establishments, and payroll by industry for each U.S. county. These data are the most comprehensive source of information on geographic patterns of employment for detailed industries. For more information, access to databases and electronic publications, see <<http://www.census.gov/epcd/cbp/view/cbpview.html>>. The Census Bureau does not publish data that could disclose information about the operations of individual companies or establishments. To account for these confidential data, ERS uses an enhanced County Business Patterns file (acquired from a private vendor) that imputes values for the suppressed data. Employees totally exempt from the Federal Insurance Contribution Act (farm operators and other self-employed persons, hired farm workers, most government employees, railroad workers, and domestic service workers) are not counted by County Business Patterns.

Economic Census is an enumeration of all nonagricultural businesses conducted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census at 5-year intervals. Data on number of establishments, employment, payroll, output or sales, and other variables are collected from all U.S. business establishments. The most recent economic census was in 1997. Preliminary data are described in several articles in this issue. For more information, see <<http://www.census.gov/epcd/www/guide.html>>.

Macroeconomic Data. The economic indicators used to monitor macroeconomic changes in the U.S. economy are derived from Federal sources. Measures of inflation, including the consumer and producer prices indexes, productivity, employment cost, and employment and unemployment data are developed by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), see <<http://www.bls.gov>>.

National income and product account (NIPA) information on capital investment, gross domestic product, and net exports is produced by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), U.S. Department of Commerce. On October 28, 1999, BEA released new NIPA estimates that incorporate a number of major definitional and statistical improvements designed to better measure the evolving U.S. economy. Information about BEA's recent comprehensive revision of the NIPA accounts is available at <<http://www.bea.doc.gov/bea/an1.htm>>. Macroeconomic data and Food and Fiber System estimates published in this issue of *Rural Conditions and Trends* reflect the revised NIPA data, and may not match data published in earlier issues.

Information on monetary policy (including changes in interest rates and foreign exchange rates) and industrial production data are obtained from the Federal Reserve Board.

Employment Data. Data on metro and nonmetro employment and unemployment reported in this issue come from three sources. The monthly Current Population Survey (CPS), conducted by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, provides detailed information on the labor force, employment, unemployment, and demographic characteristics of the metro and nonmetro population. The CPS derives estimates based on interviews of a national sample of about 47,000 households that are representative of the U.S. civilian noninstitutional population 16 years of age and over. Labor force information is based on respondents' activity during 1 week each month. Among the data products of the CPS are the monthly files, the earnings microdata files, and the March Annual Demographic Supplement (known as the March CPS). For more information, see <<http://www.bls.gov/cps/home.htm>>.

BLS county-level employment data, the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), are taken from unemployment insurance claims and State surveys of established payrolls which are then benchmarked to State totals from the CPS. The BLS data series provides monthly estimates of labor force, employment, and unemployment for individual counties. For more information, see <<http://www.bls.gov/lauhome.htm>>.

BEA employment data, unlike the household data collected by the CPS and BLS, provide establishment data on the number of jobs rather than the number of workers. The BEA data are taken primarily from administrative reports filed by employers covered under unemployment insurance laws and from information from the Internal Revenue Service and the Social Security Administration. Thus, jobs and earnings for these jobs are counted at the place of work and are based on a virtual universal count rather than a sample. The BEA data provide detailed information on the number of jobs and amount of earnings by industry at the county level. A shortcoming of the BEA data is the 2-year lag between when they are collected and when they are available for analysis.

Each of these data sets has its advantages and disadvantages. The CPS furnishes detailed employment, unemployment, and demographic data for metro and nonmetro portions of the Nation. The LAUS provides less detailed employment data than the CPS, but offers very current employment and unemployment information at the county level. The BEA provides estimates of the number of jobs and earnings by industry for individual county areas (as well as States and metropolitan areas). For access to the BEA database, see <<http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/reis/index.html>>.

While these data sources are likely to provide different estimates of employment conditions at any point in time, they generally indicate similar trends. For a comprehensive listing of regional economic data available online, see <<http://www.econdata.net>>.

June Agricultural Survey is a national survey of farmland values conducted annually by USDA. For more information about USDA estimates of agricultural land values, see <<http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/reports/nassr/other/plr-bb/>>.

Agricultural Resource Management Study (ARMS) is an annual survey that collects detailed information on financial status, production, and management of a nationwide sample of U.S. farms. The ARMS survey is conducted annually by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, and is the most comprehensive national annual data available on farm financial and operating characteristics. The sample is chosen carefully to be representative of all U.S. farm operations. The ARMS is a probability-based survey, where each respondent represents a number of farms of similar size and type. Thus, the sample data can be expanded to represent the entire farm sector for the contiguous 48 States.